

# Dane County Democratic Party Candidate Questionnaire

Bryn Horton  
Sun Prairie Area School Board

## **Professional Experience:**

I am a stay at home mom and have been for 15 years.

## **Political/Service Experience:**

I am currently serving my first term on the School Board. Through that work I serve on the Anti-Bullying Collaborative of Sun Prairie, Police Chief's Citizen Advisory Board, Sun Prairie Community Schools Executive Team, and Youth and Families Commission.

## **Why Are You Running In This Election?**

I would like to continue that work that I have been doing. In this time of uncertainty, I believe it is important to have people with experience serving. I would like to continue to work with our legislature to advance public education in our state. I will continue to advocate for our black and brown students, our LGBTQ+ students and work to make sure they feel welcome and safe in our schools. I am also a parent of kids in our school system and it is so important to have that voice at our board table.

## **What Are The Three Most Important Issues In Your Race?**

- 1). Covid-19 and the district's response to re-opening schools
- 2). Equity/anti-racism and the district and school board's championing of our black families and students
- 3). Communication with the public.

## **What Are The Largest Environmental Concerns You Aim To Deal With In Office?**

As a school board member, most of what I do is to advocate that new buildings are built to be as energy efficient as possible. Our district also spends money every year to retrofit our older buildings to make sure they are more energy efficient.

## **How Will You Use Your Position To Create More Equitable Opportunities And Help Those Living In Poverty?**

Our district uses the Community Schools model as one way to help create equitable opportunities. I am currently the Board's liaison for this work. As the liaison, I champion and support our site leaders and advocate for more funding where we need it.

Soon all of our schools have food pantries and clothing closets. I support all of these initiatives because our kids can't learn if they are hungry or emotionally unavailable. School needs to be a safe place.

As a board member I can also do more work with the city to support affordable housing as well as community support for our families who struggle. The city just started a task force that is going to look at distressed housing and how our landlords are maintaining properties and contributing to the well-being of the city. The school district has a couple of representatives on this group as the district is directly impacted by the spaces our students are living in.

## **How Do We Address Racial Inequality?**

This question is so broad and has so many answers. In terms of education, we need to work at training staff on their unconscious and conscious biases and culturally responsive teaching practices. In Sun Prairie, our enrollment has grown so quickly and our diversity has changed quickly as well (from 75% white to 60%

white in the space of 10 years). Our teachers need to do a lot of learning on what it is like to teach students that didn't grow up in Sun Prairie but are coming to us from so many different places. We need to re-think our standardized testing systems so that we can work to better meet kids where they are at. A day or 2 of tests does not tell us what a student is actually learning or what they are like as a student. It shows us where the gaps are and that they are very real but we can't do anything to fix them until teachers have the time to really be able to individualize their instruction. We need to work harder and smarter at recruiting staff of color. Living in Wisconsin already puts us at a disadvantage and then add in the lack of college students actually going into education, it compounds the issue greatly.

We need to make sure our schools are fully and equally funded. Where you live should not have an impact on the education you are getting. We need to work at getting rid of the voucher program. Our tax dollars should not be funding private, religious schools at the expense of our public school students.

### **How will you promote restorative justice and address abusive and racist practices by the police force?**

I serve on 2 committees right now that I hope will have the ability to change and grow some of the work we are already doing in Sun Prairie. I joined the Anti-bully Collaborative in Sun Prairie when it was formed by our City Council in response to issues of bullying. We ended up passing an ordinance against bullying, which was not the end result I was looking for, but we pushed restorative justice to be a big part of that ordinance. We also went through a 9 month long process to map out how we wanted to address bullying in our community and the root causes of it. We are just finally getting to the end stages of that work and beginning an

awareness campaign and will be adding an element of restorative justice to that.

I also recently was selected to be on our Police Chief's Citizen Advisory Board. This is a small, very diverse group of residents who are helping the police chief review policies and suggest improvements and changes to the way they do things every day. I have a lot of hope that this Board will make positive changes.

**Due to the ongoing economic impact of Coronavirus, many local governments are expecting unprecedented budget shortfalls. What would you prioritize in the budget? Where would you make cuts?**

Being a part of the school district, we don't have a lot of wiggle room in our budget. We are also subject to the whims of the legislature and where they choose to make cuts to education. Our enrollment has really suffered as students leave for private schools that were allowed to open when we weren't able to. We are still prioritizing our staff pay and making sure they are getting their yearly increases. We will have to make some adjustments based on our enrollment changes but in reality there aren't a lot of places we can make cuts. We have been lucky to save some money because kids aren't in schools full time but as we gradually re-open, those cost savings go away.

**How have you elevated diverse voices in government and public discourse? How would you continue to do so if elected to this office?**

I serve as the co-chair of our School Board's Key Communicator group. I am very intentional in making sure that we have diverse voices at the table for that group. I am also working with our elementary school parent groups on ways to empower parents to get involved in their schools so that our parent groups aren't exclusively white, middle class women.

However, I need to do a lot more work in making sure to follow through with our communities of color and engaging in meaningful conversation with them.

**What Are The Largest Transportation Issues You Wish To Work On And How Will You Address Them?**

On the school board, we don't do much with transportation beyond getting kids to school in buses but I do believe our city could greatly benefit from a more comprehensive mass transit system. As Sun Prairie grows, it makes it a lot harder to get around town easily if you don't have a car. I fully support the city council as they work through what the city can do and afford.

**Any Other Issues/Topics You Wish To Discuss?**